

wherever questions arose as to just what corporate form C.P.S. may have occupied, there is now an answer.

The Supreme Court has given its opinion, a green light. The enrollment drives now being staged may continue without interruption. The

more than 265,000 present beneficiary members may be assured that their medical care is forthcoming and that the new members swelling C.P.S. membership rolls each day will receive the same high quality medical service on a non-profit co-operative basis.

Study of Child Health Services

The American Academy of Pediatrics has undertaken and now has begun a nationwide Study of Child Health Services. As the study gets under way in California, its sponsors are asking and surely should be given the full cooperation of physicians who are being called upon for needed factual information. It has the approval of the California Medical Association as well as of other organizations of physicians.

Purpose of the study is two-fold: (1) to collect data to be used as the basis for scientific planning so that physicians themselves, under the present system of the practice of medicine, will be better able to devise ways for equal and proper distribution of medical care to meet the health needs of all children in the post-war period; (2) to provide an armament of facts for intelligent argument against intervention by lay or government groups.

The study is by and for doctors of medicine. Practicing pediatricians are collecting the data. At the same time, the Academy expects govern-

ment agencies to accept the findings, since the United States Public Health Service will do all the manual statistical organization of the data submitted from the various states. (The Academy asked for and was granted advisory and statistical help from the Public Health Service and the Children's Bureau. These organizations enter the study only in those capacities.)

Encompassed by the study are an investigation of hospital facilities, public and semi-public health and community services; distribution, qualifications and activities of professional personnel; and the extent of pediatric education in the medical schools.

As their part, physicians in private practice are asked to fill out a one-page questionnaire, regardless of whether they see children in their practice or not. All information is strictly confidential.

Considering the scope and purpose of the study, this modest request appears to be one that should be complied with by even the busiest of physicians.

The Responsibility of the Physician in Premarital Examinations

The premarital examination law was enacted in 1941, and has been favorably accepted by the public and the medical profession. During the war years, however, some abuses and some circumventions of the law appeared which have recently been made the subject of a study by the California State Board of Health.

The language of the law is, as laws go, remarkably simple. The law specifies merely that a physician shall give his opinion that "the person is not infected with syphilis, or if so infected, is not in a stage of that disease which is or may become communicable to the marital partner," and that a blood specimen, designated as a "premarital test" shall be submitted to a laboratory. How thorough an examination should be made is left by the law as an open question. The physician is asked only to sign a statement that the person is not infected with communicable syphilis.

The actual mechanism of taking care of candidates for marriage was purposefully made simple. The Premarital Act, as written, anticipated that the patient would go to his physician and thence to the laboratory with a request for a premarital test. The laboratory then returns its report to the physician on a special blank which the State De-

partment of Public Health has supplied the laboratory. If the test is negative the physician merely countersigns this report and gives it to the candidates for marriage, who in turn present it to the Marriage License Bureau.

It is, in fact, the very simplicity and minimizing of red tape which have allowed irregular practitioners and laymen operating laboratories to circumvent the original intention of the law. In the Los Angeles area, for instance, until the State Board of Health compelled their removal, several laboratories near the Hall of Records had large electric signs advertising "Marriage Examinations—Four-Hour Service," or equivalent.

It is self-evident that such advertising was not calculated to encourage the couples to seek out the physician of their choice as the law intended, but instead, as is the case with so many schemes to commercialize medicine, left the physician in the position of a sort of undesirable end-product who was useful only for his signature.

Recent questionnaire studies by the California State Board of Health on large numbers of couples who have had premarital examinations, reveal that in some areas as many as 40 to 50 per cent of these couples go directly to such lab-